Met Office

Winter 2015/16

The following represents an assessment of the weather experienced across the UK during Winter 2015/16 (December, January and February) and how it compares with the 1981 to 2010 average.

Coming only two years after the stormy winter of 2013/14, this equally remarkable winter brought severe flooding in December from record-rainfall totals, accompanied by exceptional warmth from a persistent flow of Tropical Maritime air. January and February remained mostly unsettled but were thankfully quieter. Nine named storms from mid-November (a new Met Office /Met Eireann initiative) led to some impacts from strong winds, but it was the rainfall which resulted in the most serious impacts, causing extensive flooding across many northern and western parts of the UK; at least 16,000 homes were reported to be flooded in England alone. During storm Desmond on 5 December, 341.4 mm of rain fell in 24-hours, a new UK rainfall record.

Winter 2015/16 was third-warmest for the UK in a series from 1910, behind the winters of 1989 and 2007. For England and Wales, it was the warmest winter in the series. December 2015 (UK anomaly + 4.1 °C) was easily the warmest December for both the UK and the Central England Temperature (CET) series from 1659. Remarkably, December had the highest positive anomaly for any month in the CET series by a margin of well over 1 °C. In comparison temperatures in January (UK anomaly +0.9 °C) and February (+ 0.2 °C) were mostly unremarkable.

Winter 2015/16 was second-wettest for the UK in a series from 1910, with only winter 2013/14 wetter. For Wales and Scotland, winter 2015/16 was equal-wettest and for Northern Ireland this was the wettest winter in the series. December (UK anomaly 182%) saw between two and four times the monthly average rainfall falling across much of the west and north, and this was the wettest calendar month in the UK series. January (148%), and February (125%) continued fairly wet in many areas, January exceptionally so in eastern Scotland and north-east England. Rainfall totals for the winter varied from less than 150 mm across parts of East Anglia to more than 1 m across upland areas in the north and west; Capel Curig (Gwynedd) recorded over 2 m of rain during the winter and nearly 2.8 m (106% of the annual average) in four months November to February.

December and January were dull months across many areas, particularly in the west, whereas February was a sunny month for most, with some bright, sunny spells particularly during the second half of the month.

UK statistical summary

Mean Temperature

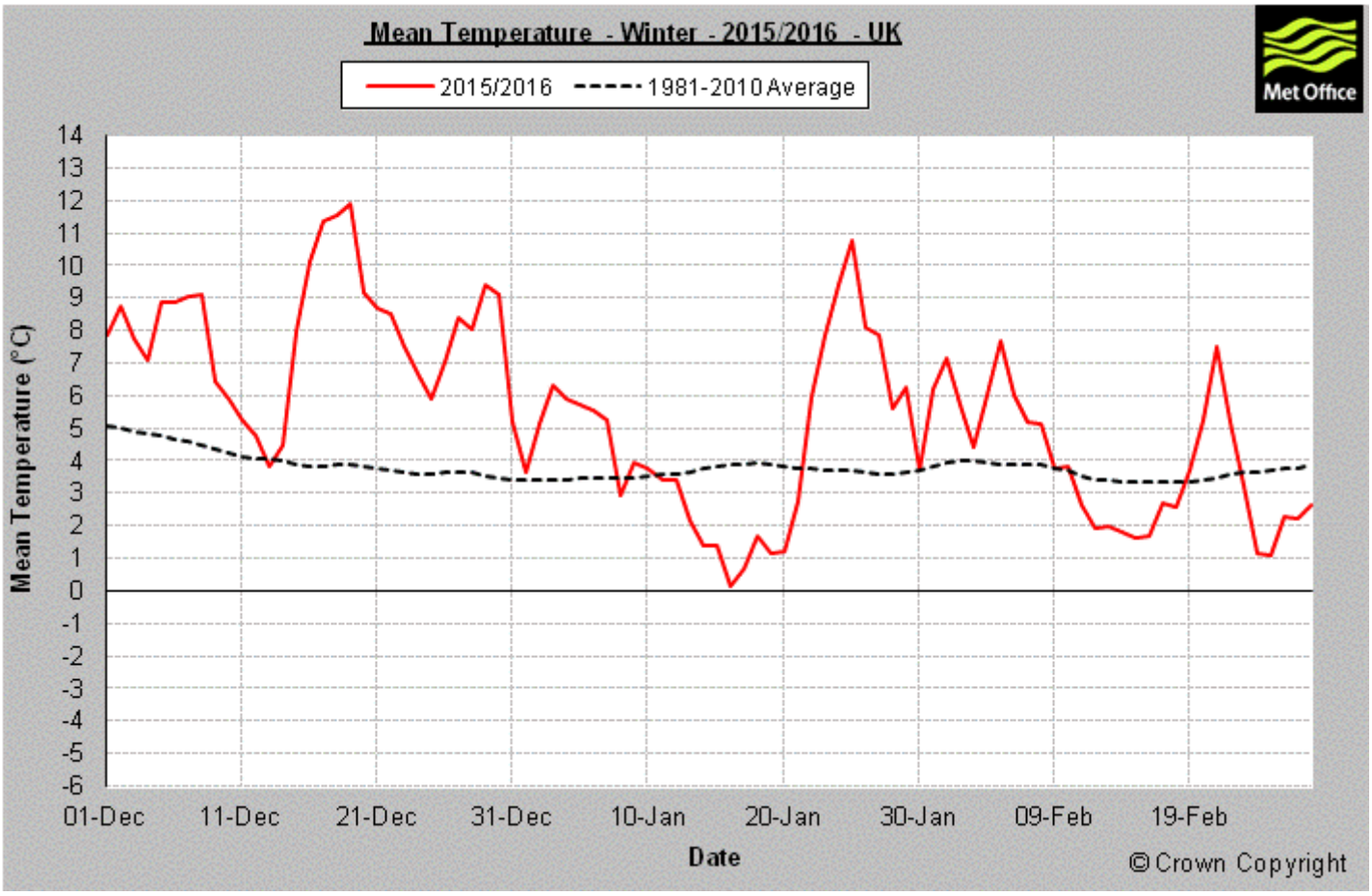
The mean value is 5.5 °C, which is 1.8 °C above the 1981-2010 average.

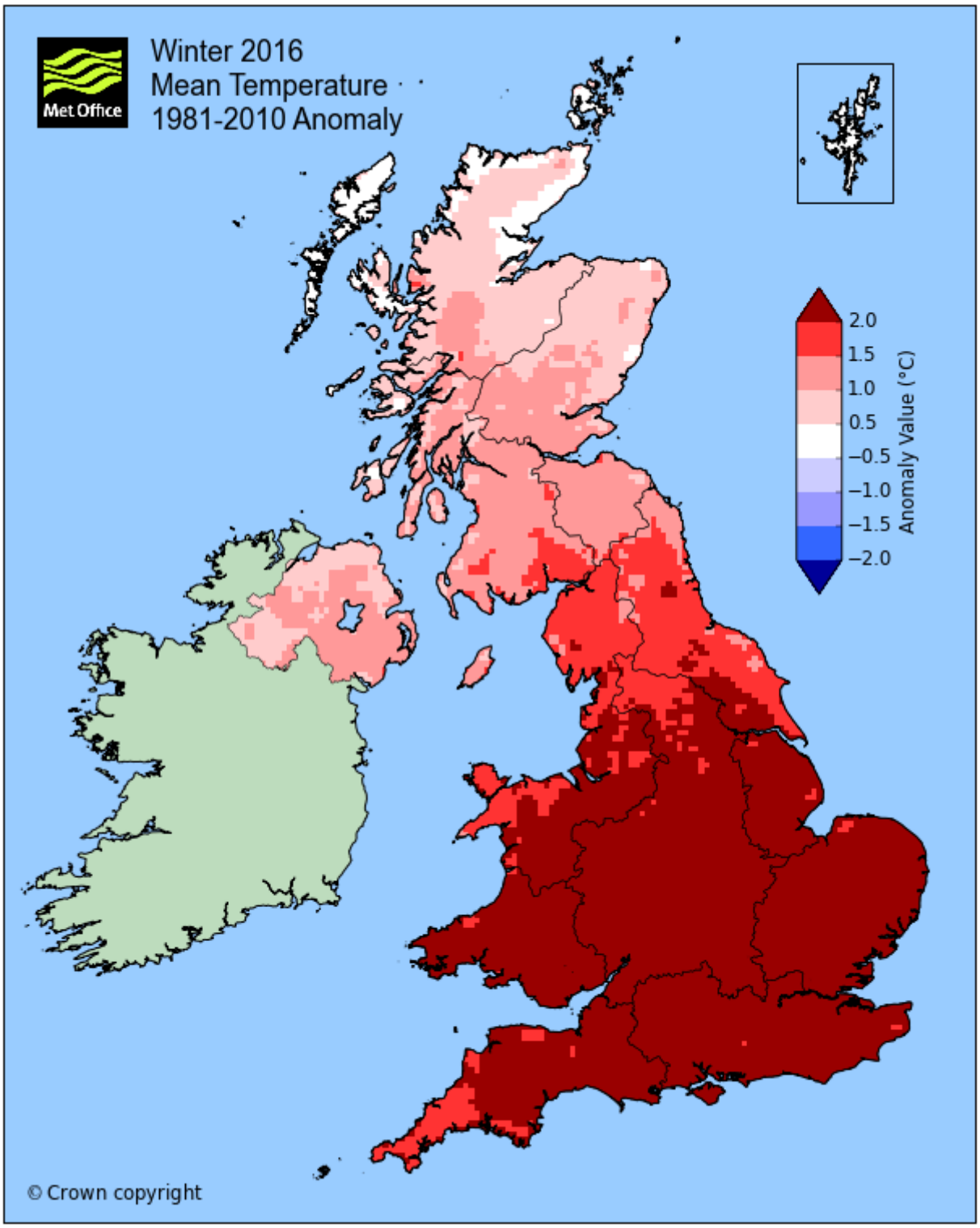
Rainfall

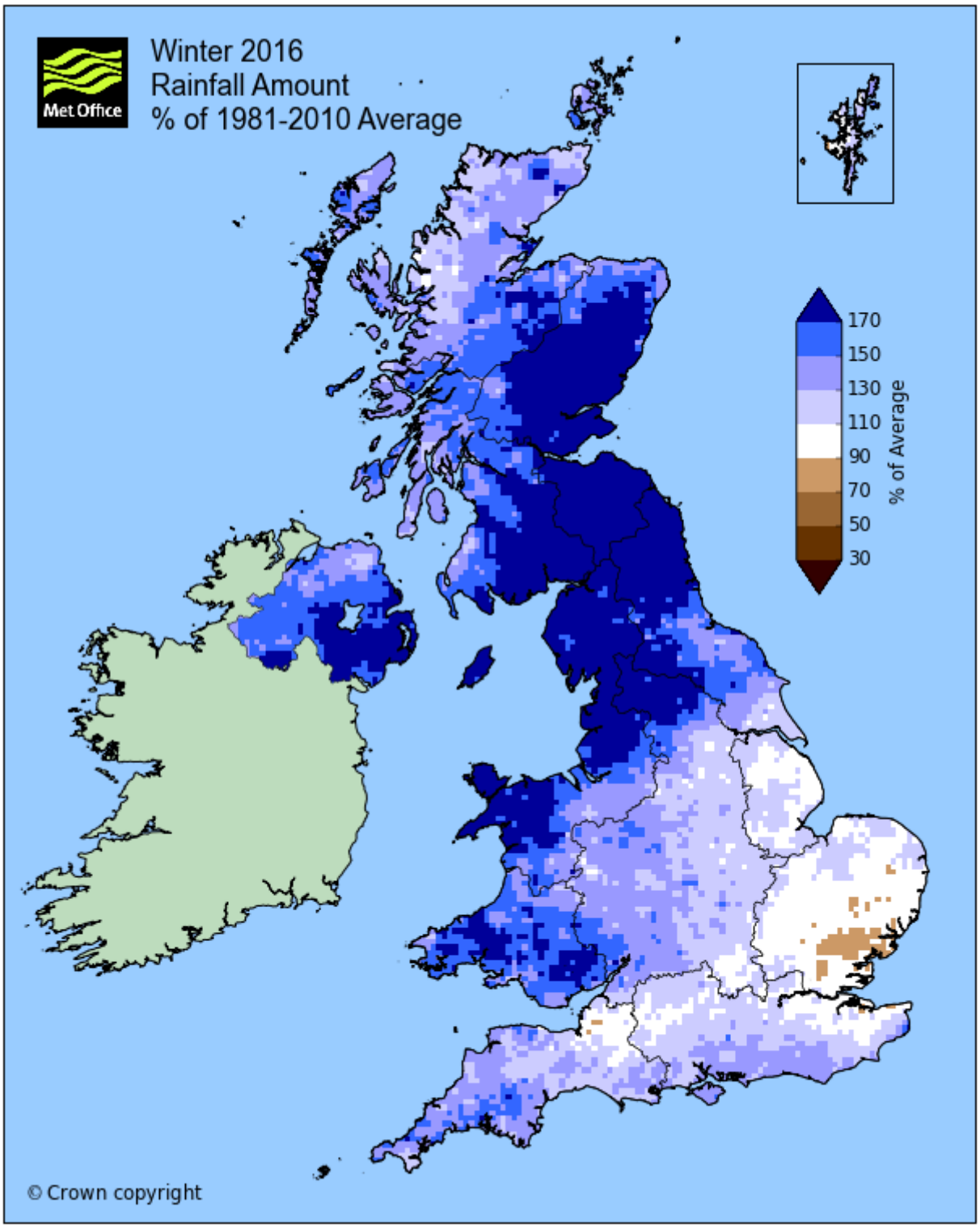
The total is 509 mm, which is 154% of the 1981-2010 average.

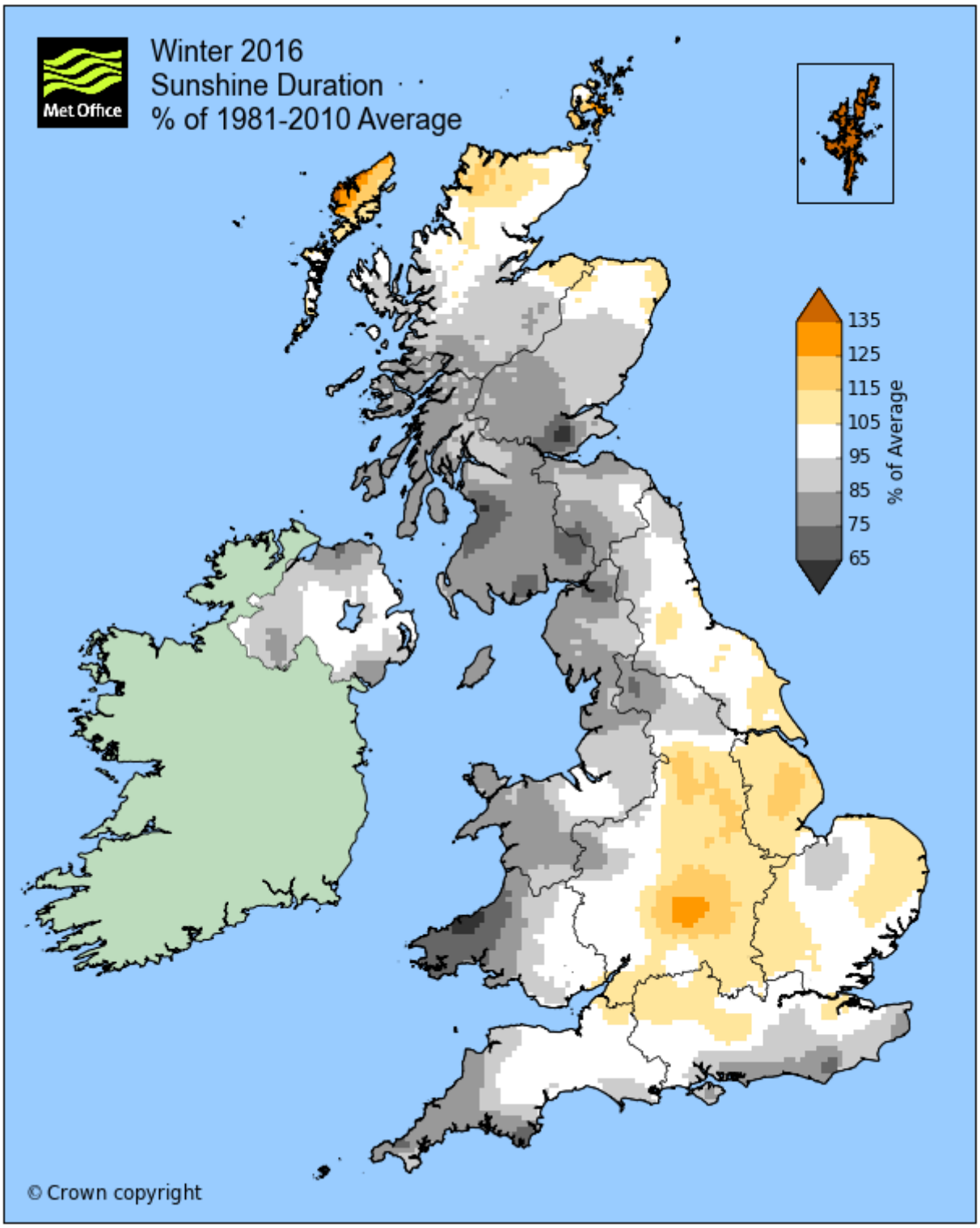
Sunshine

The total is 151 hours, which is 96% of the 1981-2010 average.


Mean Temperature - Winter - 2015/2016 - UK
2015/2016
1981-2010 Average
Met Office
Mean Temperature (°C)
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3
-4
-5
-6
01-Dec
11-Dec
21-Dec
31-Dec
10-Jan
20-Jan
30-Jan
09-Feb
19-Feb
Date
© Crown Copyright


Met Office
Winter 2016
Mean Temperature
1981-2010 Anomaly
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
−0.5
−1.0
−1.5
−2.0
Anomaly Value (°C)
© Crown copyright


Met Office
Winter 2016
Rainfall Amount
% of 1981-2010 Average
170
150
130
110
90
70
50
30
% of Average
© Crown copyright



Last updated: 3 March 2016

Met Office